

Legacy

Chapter 1

The beach sat silently but for the lapping of waves, what creatures lived here had long since retired for the night. A thick mist obscured a full and bright moon like a quilt, making the air damp and cloying.

Out of the quiet, all consuming mist a small boat slowly made its way to shore, powered by two great seaman with their oars. A hooded person at either end of the boat looked on toward the beach, it would not be long now.

Upon striking the ground the two passengers disembarked with haste, giving the little boat a firm shove out into the sea from whence it came, both stood silently on the spot until the boat was completely engulfed by the fog. The two figures pulled back at their hoods, to reveal in both the fine features of elves, a man and woman.

"I am glad to be rid of those people, I suspect even my patience would not have been able to cope with that stench for another week." Said the man with a hint of bitterness. The woman looked out toward the sea with a sigh.

"The humans aren't so bad, but ship life does bring out the worst in them."

The man snorted indignantly, "Perhaps if you weren't so like them you might see them for what they are: Filthy animals." The girl's eyes locked onto those of her taller companion, "And perhaps if you weren't so high and mighty, you might stop to see that despite their flaws, they are basically a good people, even if they lack the vision and knowledge that we possess." She retorted quickly.

The elf looked down upon his charge, this mere slip of a girl in elven years had wisdom before her time, and a patience that even a full blooded elf could admire when it came to the other races.

"I apologize Mae, I should not have said what I said."

The girl looked up at her companion, this dark elf that stayed at her side. "I know Ashar, I know it's difficult for you to do this, but I wouldn't want to travel with anyone else."

"It is much harder than you know."

The two began up the beach not knowing fully what to expect when they reached their final destination, or indeed where their destination would be for that matter. Both knew however that wherever they ended up, it would

not be easy for either of them.

Dawn broke with Ashar watching carefully the wrecked remains of a halfling village, amongst the great trees that covered much of the land, these tiny folk could easily move about in relative safety, and their knowledge of magic, although crude was effective in dissuading all but the most determined from entering their villages without their leave. Sadly it seemed, for these folk at least, that they had encountered just such a group of people.

Mae stirred, unlike her companion, her mixed heritage meant that she could not travel as far or as fast as full blooded elves, and after two days of travel without sleep, she had succumbed to her bodies protests for sleep. Ashar had spotted the village and had set up camp within the confines of the effects of the halfling magic. It had not taken Ashar long to realize all was not as it should be within the village, for no sound had been heard since they had set down. His eyes had seen through the dark in a manner only dwarfs could match, he had seen the bloodstains on the ground, the slight smell of burnt flesh, whatever had happened, it was not recent.

"So what did you find?" Asked Mae as she casually surveyed the damage
"Much, most the buildings seem intact, though a couple of the smaller out buildings have been put to flame, some signs of a funeral pyre and as you can see a lot of blood on the ground. I would suggest caution, whoever did this don't seem to be around at the present, but the fact they made it past the Halfling's defensive magic suggests a great amount of power. Possibly even those of my kin."

Mae nodded, for not being a dark elf would be enough to warrant her death, but to be half human as well, would compound the offence all but a few dark elves eyes.

"Are there any signs of survivors?" She asked after a while.

Ashar shook his head in the negative before returning his gaze to the village. Whoever had done this thing he pondered were not it seemed, too worried about the discovery of their work.

"I think that we should be going now, if we keep a steady pace, we should reach the cave soon" Ashar said without taking his eyes off of the scene before him.

"I know, I just wish that our first contact with this land was not that of ruin. I do have a very bad feeling about all of this that I simply cannot shake off." Ashar remained silent, but in his heart he too felt the feeling of there being something not at all right about this. The two stood up and began to walk

through the maze of trees toward their first destination.

It was nightfall before the two travellers paused for a break, the fog that had marked their arrival had crept inward much further this night. Although both could still make their way through it with preternatural ease. The value in doing so was not great enough to warrant it.

"You haven't explained to me yet why we are going to this place, nor indeed what its connection is to your family." Ashar said casually

Mae pondered the question for a while. It was not often that Ashar would make idle chat, as was his kind's way.

"Partly for sentimental reasons, partly for reasons of necessity. The spirit who guards the cave has need to speak to me. For what I won't say, but it is important enough for me to have left the Romarian lands to this place."

Ashar nodded, in over 300 years of service to the family Leander, there was more information in that one moment than he could recall ever being told before. There was much he still did not understand, but for the moment it would suffice.

The sounds of footfalls alerted the two. Whoever it was, was running and, by the pattern of the falls, was injured. Both Ashar and Mae moved toward the roadside. Out of the gloom two figures appeared, one quite obviously trying to escape the other. The second ran as if his feet did not touch the ground, no sound gave away his approach.

Mae nodded to Ashar, who began to make his way up the side of the roadway within the tree line, whoever the second person was, they would not see him coming. Mae watched as the injured man was caught by his adversary, by the look of his clothes, he was obviously a man of wealth. By the look of his pursuer, he was quite likely a brigand.

Mae whispered in the elvish tongue for Ashar to attack, as she herself arose to meet the people before her. Her cloak flew out behind her as her pace increased. The attacker turned just in time to see Mae's fist connect with his nose. Ashar caught the man before he hit the ground, his dagger pressed firmly against the man's throat.

"Human, if you move, your blood will spill this night." He whispered hoarsely.

Mae turned to the injured man, he looked to suffer several wounds, including a gash to his lower thigh.

The thick velvet cloth that made up his trousers were torn and stained by his blood.

"Sir, I'm going to heal your wounds as best as I can here, I'm not going to

hurt you." She said calmly.

The man nodded consent, before passing out. Mae closed her eyes and concentrated, it had been a very long time since she had had to perform this sort of spell. Her mind found the words, immediately as she spoke them a soft blue glow began to emanate from her hand, pressing it against the gash on his thigh, the man gasped.

After a moment, the glow faded, Mae looked at the man, his wounds looked like they had been made weeks ago. Only scar tissue remained as evidence of the encounter.

"Thank you." Said the man, who by now had regained full consciousness. Mae smiled, it had been an even longer time since she had received thanks for anything.

"My pleasure, Sir. Why was this man so intent on catching you?" She asked evenly.

"I was separated from my guard in an ambush not two hours from here, this man followed, it seems that I was marked out."

Ashar pressed his knife harder against the attackers throat. "Is this true? Tell me the truth, I will know if what escapes your lips is false." The man in his grasp bit down on something in his mouth, a slight crack was heard by all and the man slumped to the floor.

Mae pressed her fingers against the mans throat, there was no pulse.

"Interesting. Sir, I know not who you are, or what you are, but for you to have been ambushed by at least one professional assassin, you must have upset someone of great importance and wealth."

The Man sighed slightly, "I am Mithrilaxe, eldest son of Grishar, Lord of Fort. Those men were one of several recent attempts on my life. They were the last of the nest we uncovered several weeks ago. With luck, my guard will be along shortly. Though I would if I may, I would stay in your company until that time."

Ashar shrugged before walking off into the woods with the Assassin's corpse. Mae watched him go before replying.

"I apologize for him, he does not mix well with humans. But we will wait with you a while." She said as she stood up.

"Who are you, if you don't mind my asking?" Replied the young lord.

Mae smiled, "I guess I owe you that much, I am Mae, daughter to Brian, I am the third holder of the title Leander."

Mithrilaxe gulped, the last time a Leander had walked these lands was in the age of his great grandfather. They were dark days.

"I'm pleased to make you're acquaintance. If I can at any time offer you hospitality, you and your friend are of course welcome at Fort. I think your

work has earned you that."
Mae smiled politely but said nothing.

The sounds of hooves began to echo around the wood, it was dawn and the mist had long since left the woods.

"I think that you men have at last found you." Said Ashar gruffly as appeared out of the woods.

Mae looked over to the elder elf and asked "Did you sit and watch or guide them?"

Ashar looked at her impassively "I watched, my kin are known in these parts of the world still by sight."

Mithrilaxe looked again at the elder elf, in the dawn light his features seemed to be like that of any other elf, but on an instinctual level he knew that not to be the case.

"You're a dark elf?" He asked. Ashar looked at him for a moment, "Yes human, they are my kin."

The young lord blinked for a moment, before turning to Mae. Her features were softer than the few elves he had encountered. "And you?" He asked her.

Mae shook her head in the negative "I am of mixed heritage, more or less half human. Ashar is my companion, he will not harm any except on my order or in my defence."

Mithrilaxe raised an eyebrow, such pairings were unheard of, elves simply didn't get on with their dark cousins. There was more to this than either were telling him, but for now, he let it drop.

"We will go now young Sir, I think it better this way." Said Mae as she stood up to leave.

"Ashar, Mae, that offer remains open to the pair of you, regardless of your blood, you still saved my life. I hold no ill will against either of you."

Ashar smiled a rare smile, "When our business is done, we will see about taking you up on your offer, it is a kind one."

The two left as the head of the first horse came into view. It had been a very long night.